

# Predictors of Therapeutic Community Role Model Status

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## Abstract

Residents of therapeutic communities (TCs) are expected to act as role models for peers (De Leon, 2000; Perfas, 2012). This exploratory study looks at the personal and social network characteristics that predict role model status within TCs. Fifty female residents of a prison-based TC were given a peer interaction log that included behaviors such as sending verbal affirmations and corrections to peers. Participants were asked to track peer interactions for a 12 hour period. Verbal affirmations and corrections were treated as a directed social network. UCINET was used to generate Freeman degree centrality for the networks of affirmations sent to peers and corrections sent to peers. Bonacich power (attenuation factor of .1) was generated for affirmations sent to peers. Two weeks after resident data was collected, staff members were surveyed about whether they considered participants to be role models, using a simple yes/no format. The yes answers were then summed to form a role model score. SPSS was used to complete a Poisson regression with this score as a dependent variable, with .10 set as the alpha level due to small sample size. The number of corrections that residents gave (Freeman degree centrality) was positively correlated with staff ratings of role model status. The number of affirmations that residents gave was negatively correlated with staff ratings of role model status; this variable did not approach statistical significance until Bonacich power was included. Bonacich power, in turn, fell below significance when age was added. When residents give more corrections to peers, more staff members see them as role models. The opposite is true then they give more affirmations to peers. This may be because staff view the act of giving a correction to be a challenging one.

## Introduction

### ❖ The Therapeutic Community (TC)

- A place where individuals who share a common problem live and work together to better themselves.
- Hierarchy of resident work crews that lead to greater levels of responsibility and privileges.
- Attempts to remove individual from prior social networks and socialize individual to widely accepted, normed behaviors.
- Effective treatment approach, but lacking insight into how the processes work to produce results.

### ❖ Peers are the primary change agents

- Community is method.
- Main peer roles: (a) Functional (work roles) & (b) Community Members (peer monitoring through corrections and affirmations).

### ❖ Peer corrections (“pull-ups”)

- Reminder of expected behaviors/attitudes.
- Effective means of consequential teaching.

### ❖ Peer affirmations (“push-ups”)

- Spontaneously offered to show community approval and support.
- Positive acknowledgement for peers and their attempts to change.
- Crucial balance to verbal corrections and sanctions.

### ❖ Role models

- Resident stages: Learn → Practice → Model
- Recognized position.
- Socially reinforced.
- Fundamental to reciprocity.

## Research Agenda

### ❖ Question:

- What personal and network characteristics predict staff ratings of resident role model status?

### ❖ Hypothesis:

- The more affirmations and corrections TC residents give to their peers, the more highly they will be rated by staff as role models.

## Method

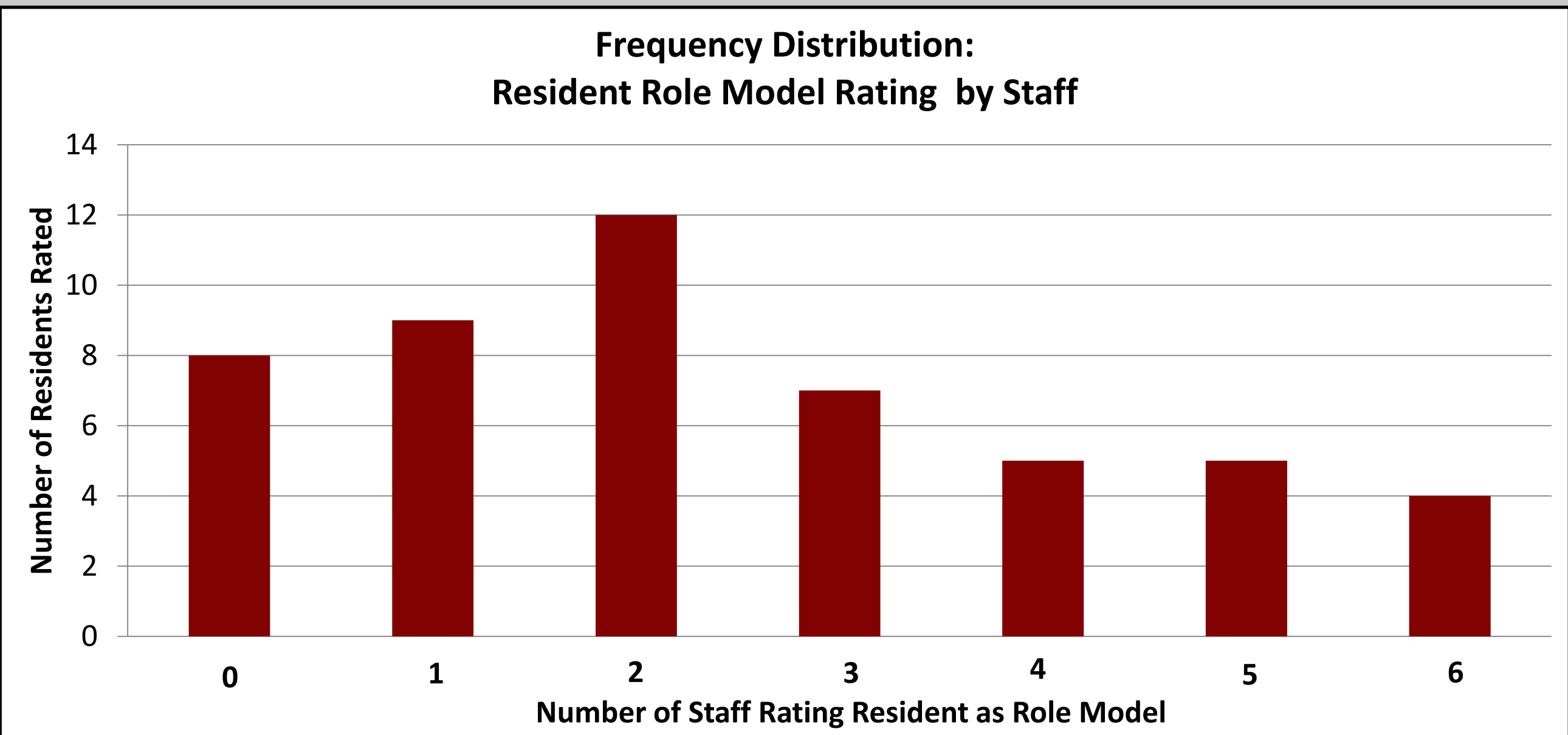
### Part 1--Resident Participants:

- Over the course of one 12-hour day in May 2012, 50 female residents from a prison-based TC tracked their daily interactions with their peers using an interaction log. Relevant variables tracked for this study included:
  - Verbal push-ups given (affirmations)
  - Verbal pull-ups given (corrections)
- Residents were informed that their decision to participate or not to participate would not affect their parole, probation, or judicial release in any way. They were also informed that their inclusion in our study would not result in monetary incentives or treatment privileges.
- Demographic information was also collected, including age, race/ethnicity, education, admit dates, substance abuse & treatment history, roommates, staff caseload, work crews, phases, sentence length, etc.
- Graduates of the program have about a 4.5% reincarceration rate at 3 yrs.

### Part 2 --Staff Participants:

- Two weeks following the collection of resident interactions, staff members were presented with a list of participants, and asked to rate them as role models by circling a response of “yes” or “no.”
- Staff ratings of “yes” were summed for each resident, generating an overall score rating ranging from 0 to 6; the higher the score, the more highly residents are viewed as role models by staff.

## Results



Resident Participants N= 50; Staff Participants N = 6

- Poisson regression was used because the dependent variable was a count.
- 8% (4 out of 50 residents) were rated by all 6 staff members as role models.
- 16% (8 out of 50 residents) received no staff ratings, meaning none of the staff viewed these residents as role models.
- 24% (12 out of 50 residents) were most frequently rated as role models by 2 out of the 6 staff members.

## Results

Parameter Estimates				
Parameter	B	Std. Error	Wald Chi-Square	Sig.
(Intercept)	0.811	0.137	34.981	0.000
VpIIOut	0.215	0.0884	5.912	0.015
VpshOut	-.0347	0.1844	3.536	0.06
Bpow0.1	0.197	0.124	2.52	0.112
(Scale)	1 <sup>a</sup>			

(Dependent Variable = Role Model Score)

Parameter Estimates				
Parameter	B	Std. Error	Wald Chi-Square	Sig.
(Intercept)	0.352	0.388	0.825	0.364
VpIIOut	0.202	0.0878	5.309	0.021
VpshOut	-.0385	0.1857	4.288	0.038
Bpow0.1	0.231	0.1263	3.343	0.067
Age	0.013	0.0102	1.666	0.197
(Scale)	1 <sup>a</sup>			

- Data represents the outcomes of directed social ties.

- $A \rightarrow B$  but not necessarily  $A \leftarrow B$

- Freeman degree centrality was generated using UCINET for the corrections and affirmations given to peers.
  - Number of corrections given was positively correlated with role model status,  $B = .202$ ,  $p = .021$ .
  - Number of affirmations given was negatively correlated,  $B = -.385$ ,  $p = .038$ .
- UCINET was used to generate Bonacich power (beta centrality). Bonacich power is based on undirected ties, thus either an affirmation sent or received.
  - Bonacich power suppresses verbal pushups (affirmations), which are not statistically significant unless it is included.
  - Age suppresses Bonacich power, which is not statistically significant unless age is included.
  - Outliers do not appear to be a problem—the model run without them does not change in any significant manner.

## Discussion & Conclusions

- As residents gave more corrections to peers, more staff rated them as role models.
  - Failure to report observation of negative behaviors/attitudes = condoning them.
  - Ignoring individual’s struggles = irresponsible to self and peers.
  - However, staff do not necessarily observe all verbal corrections.
- As residents gave more affirmations to peers, fewer staff rated them as role models.
  - However, those who are connected to more central TC members are more likely to be seen as role models.
  - Bonacich power assumes a symmetric network, so we don’t know if this represents affirmations sent or received.
- The more connections one has, the more one can influence others. Thus, those rated by staff as role models really are likely to be more influential, at least through their corrections.
- The positive correlation with corrections and negative with affirmations contradicts most literature. However, this program appears to be successful.
- This was a pilot study with a small sample size containing only female residents.
  - Results are preliminary

## References

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